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October 8, 2009

Chair, Catherine Reheis-Boyd
Blue Ribbon Task Force
California Department of Fish and Game

Subject: Support for City Wide Laguna Beach Marine Reserve
SCRSB Proposal 3

Dear Chair Person Reheis-Boyd and Task Force Members William W.
Anderson, Meg Caldwell, Dr. Jane Pisano and Gregory F. Shem,

The South Laguna Civic Association (established in 1946) wishes to thank you for your dedication and vision to implement the Marine Life Protection Act to restore our oceans. Unfortunately, over one half century of over-fishing, urban runoff and water pollution, procrastination and neglect have negatively impacted much of the Southern California coast.

Designing a coherent ecosystem where habitat can be restored and marine life can flourish is a critical part of marine life protection and restoration. Our support for a **citywide Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve as indicated in SCRSB Proposal 3** follows years of deliberation and preparation among civic leaders, community based organizations, citizens, regional stakeholders and visitors.

The "Vision 2030" master plan for the city of Laguna Beach declared in 2001 a commitment to preserve and promote the "Laguna Bluebelt" to compliment the region's internationally renowned Laguna Greenbelt. Sound science recognizes the Laguna Beach coast represents the best habitat between Palo Verdes and La Jolla. South Laguna, with precipitous, steep hillsides, bluffs and coves is the best of the best.

Despite extensive fishing regulations, pressures on marine resources have grown as fishing effort and ability have increased and as coastal development has transformed coastal habitats and generated pollutants. In the last 35 years, both federal and state government programs have made an effort to address, if not solve, all of these problems. However, they have not been sufficient to stem the dramatic declines of marine fisheries. The

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development of MPA networks reflects shifts in the goals of fishery management away from a single-species focus on maximum yields toward sustainable yields and an ecosystem approach. The purpose of the MPA network is to increase coherence and effectiveness in protecting the state's marine life and habitats, marine ecosystems, and marine natural heritage, as well as to improve recreational, educational and study opportunities provided by marine ecosystems subject to minimal human disturbance. In short, the purpose of the MPAs is to provide a network of marine habitats where mature plant and marine life can thrive in "nursery areas" to repopulate the depleted habitats and overall marine fisheries.

According to the MLPA's "Master Plan for MPAs", the MLPA "requires that the MPA network and individual MPAs be of adequate size, number, type of protection and location as to ensure that each MPA and the network as a whole meet the objectives of the MLPA. In addition, the MLPA requires that representative habitats in each bioregion be replicated, to the extent possible, in more than one marine reserve." The MLPA's "Science Advisory Team Guidance on MPA Network Design" as documented in the Master Plan specifies (Section 3.4, page 34), "For an objective of protecting adult populations, based upon adult neighborhood sizes and movement patterns, MPAs should have an alongshore span of 5-10 km (3-6 mi or 2.5-5.4 nmi) of coastline, and preferably 10-20 km (6-12.5 mi or 5.4-11 nmi). Larger MPAs should be required to fully protect marine birds, mammals and migratory fish." And, "For an objective of facilitating dispersal and connectedness of important bottom-dwelling fish and invertebrate groups among MPAs, based on currently known scales of larval dispersal, MPAs should be placed within 50-100 km (31-62 mi or 27-54 nmi) of each other."

Laguna Beach has some of the only "keystone" marine habitats, including rocky intertidal and kelp, between the Palos Verdes Peninsula and La Jolla Cove. The alongshore span of Laguna Beach from Abalone Point to Three Arch Bay is approximately 7 miles within the "preferable" alongshore span. The distance from Palos Verdes Peninsula to Laguna Beach is approximately 45 miles and the distance from Laguna Beach to La Jolla Cove is approximately 64 miles, roughly within the criteria of "within 50-100 km" between MPAs. Thus, to meet the requirements of the MLPA, following the Science Advisory Team Guidance, the entire coastline of Laguna Beach should be incorporated into a State Marine Reserve MPA and should provide protection for adult species.

For Laguna Beach, our unique and highly valuable "keystone" marine habitat, especially north and south of Main Beach, is most valuable as nursery areas for marine life. South Laguna with rare San Onofre Breccia rock formations provides a multitude of underwater caves and crevices ideal for juvenile development and protection of adult species. The steep geomorphology creates powerful deep-water upwelling and world-class recreational surf and beach related sports. Abundant offshore rock formations support once robust kelp forests and historically rich abalone sites.

Because sea life thrives in Laguna Beach, it has become a focal point of available fish and invertebrates in shallow water, an area of high desirability for commercial and recreational fishermen. However, for the vast majority of residents and visitors to Laguna Beach, who are non-consumptive users of coastal resources, the over-fishing and degradation of marine habitats results in a significant loss of enjoyment and economic value. As an example, with the indiscriminate hunting of mature lobster and California sheephead, which are predators of sea urchins, the kelp forests that naturally grow on Laguna's rocky intertidal reefs are unable to thrive since the over-population of urchins feed on the kelp's holdfast. The loss of kelp forest results in the loss of "safe harbor" for small and maturing fish, as well as the mature adult females with the higher reproductive rates, causing declining populations of many species. Laguna's kelp forests are also highly valued destination sites for local and visiting non-consumptive SCUBA divers, snorkelers and ocean swimmers, who wish to experience the abundance of wild fish, invertebrates and the wide variety of marine species historically found throughout Laguna Beach.

The City of Laguna Beach and many citizen efforts have a long history of protecting our coastal resources for the benefit of local business, residents and visitors from throughout the world. The City of Laguna Beach has a full time Marine Protection Officer, who is supported by volunteers and community organizations dedicated to protecting our marine life resources.

While the state is working on re-defining and improving MPAs in the region, the City of Laguna Beach will be directly affected by MPA network determinations. To protect the City's best interests, economic value and city revenue derived from tourists attracted to the enhanced environmental desirability of marine habitats in Laguna Beach, the South Laguna Civic Association unanimously requests designation of a citywide State Marine Reserve along the entire coastline of Laguna Beach. A State Marine Reserve would allow normal use of Laguna Beach's coastal areas but prohibit consumptive take of marine resources in an effort to protect sea life from harvesting impacts.

While some RSG MPA alternatives suggested commercial and/or recreational fishing along some areas in Laguna Beach, the enforcement feasibility of these intricate and detailed regulations (including type, size, number, method of take, SLOT limits, etc.) would require extensive sea and land resources. The cost for this type of enforcement, to be effective, would place a significant burden on the City and are beyond the resources of the City of Laguna Beach, even with current state support.

In contrast, effective enforcement of a citywide State Marine Reserve including the rare habitat of South Laguna may be reasonably achieved within the current City and state resources, without increased costs, since any observed fishing violations can be readily identified from shoreline and



enforced. A citywide Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve would be the lowest cost burden on the City.

If, however, a State Marine Reserve were not established consistently along the entire coast of Laguna Beach, arbitrary geographic divisions would be created within the City and trigger gross inequities for the businesses and residential communities along the coast. For example, fishing impacts presently distributed throughout the City would be unfairly concentrated in South Laguna to decimate the final remaining adult fish species. Additionally, disparities would be created between the higher values of hotels and residential properties in close proximity to a Marine Reserve in contrast to the depressed values of hotel and residential properties in areas where there remain degraded habitats and intensified fishing. In some proposed MPAs, South Laguna residents and businesses would be unfairly taxed to support marine life protection operations elsewhere in the city in an abbreviated Laguna Marine Reserve while enduring the congestion and destruction of unfettered access to fragile coves and underwater caves.

With a consistent designation for a citywide Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve:

- Requirements of the Science Advisory Team will be fulfilled in the Southern California Regional MLPA
- Public communication of "no take" is simplified with guaranteed fairness and equity for all businesses and residential communities
- Desirability for all coastal areas is enhanced
- Enforcement is less complicated and burdensome on the City to achieve enforcement feasibility

The MLPA is central to the future of South Laguna and all of Laguna Beach.

As a small community based organization with extensive relationships among other citizen groups, the City, Orange County and state/federal agencies, the South Laguna Civic Association appreciates your efforts to recognize and incorporate our concerns in approving a citywide Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve.

Sincerely,



Bill Rihn
President
South Laguna Civic Association

www.southlaguna.org

